

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 8, 2004

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We urge you to take all steps necessary to ensure that national flu vaccine distribution is prioritized for the most vulnerable populations: our children and the elderly. Further, we urge you to put in place emergency measures to prevent the recurrence of the maldistribution and profiteering of the last crisis during the 2000-2001 flu season.

As you may have heard this week, the California-based Chiron Corporation, the second largest supplier of influenza vaccine to the United States, has halted production. Chiron Corp. announced that it will not be able to supply the 46 to 48 million doses it had been expected to provide due to bacterial contamination at its Liverpool, England manufacturing facility.




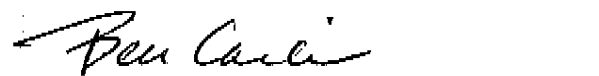
You may also know, the flu is attributed to an estimated 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations each year. Unfortunately, this is not the first time in recent years that we will have been caught short. While we understand that you were not in the White House when the crisis started in the fall of 2000, the scant supply of vaccine during the 2000-2001 flu season should have been a wake up call. Many American children and seniors were unable to receive flu shots, physicians and public health departments had shortages, and many providers faced steep price increases due to opportunistic distributors engaging in price gouging. At the same time, there were many reports of healthier, low-risk populations readily being inoculated at grocery stores and even restaurants.

Just last week, in testimony before the U.S. Senate, Janet Heinrich of the Government Accountability Office foreshadowed another impending crisis. Ms. Heinrich

pointed out that while the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) may have developed a draft "Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan" that provides guidance on state, local, and federal roles, responsibilities, and collaborations, she was clear that "decisions about the purchase, distribution, and administration of vaccines [were] unresolved" and were being devolved to the states. This is an alarming omission on the part of HHS. The eve of an imminent flu crisis, however, is not quite the time to debate the merits of federalism in public health. As such, we urge you to take whatever measures are necessary to provide emergency authority to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to ensure that the gap in HHS's pandemic plan—an absence of plans for adequate acquisition and prioritization of distribution—is filled in, to ensure that high-risk populations are served, and to ensure that there will not be a recurrence of profiteering during a public health crisis.

We are working with our colleagues to develop a legislative solution. We are urging Congressional leaders to bring it to the floor when Congress is expected to return in November to complete its legislative business. In the interim, however, we urge you take immediate action to avoid another crisis.

Sincerely,

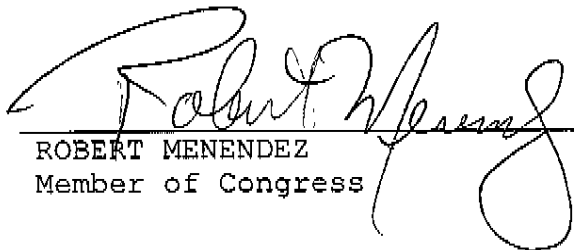

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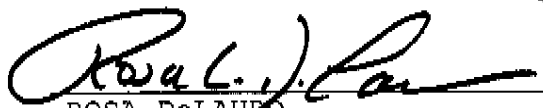
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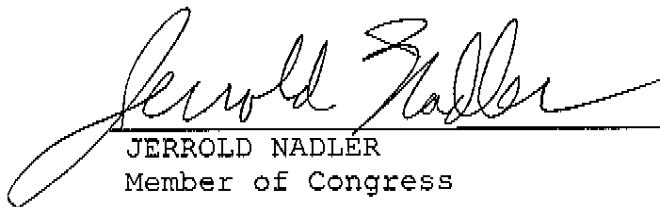
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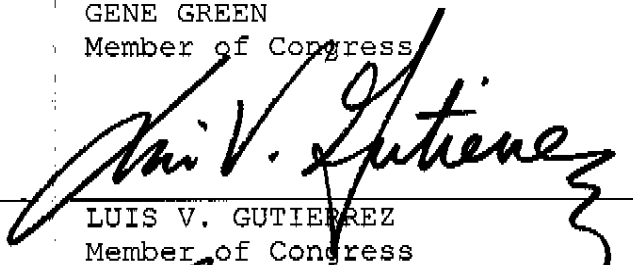
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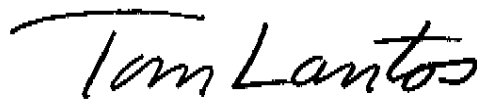
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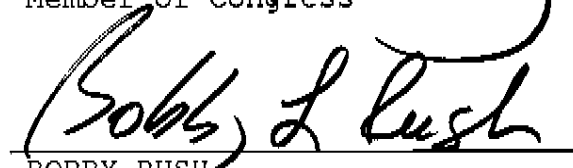
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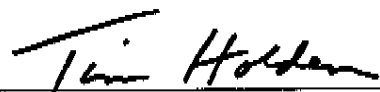
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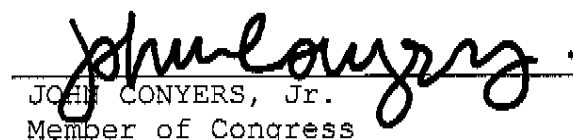
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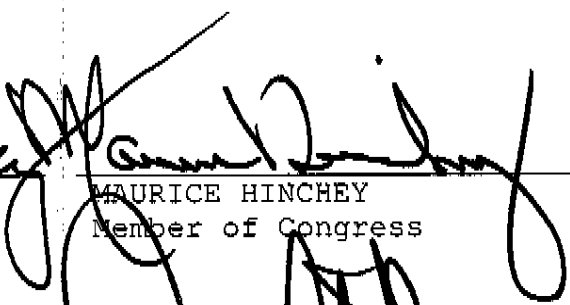



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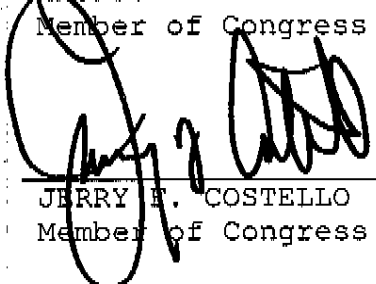


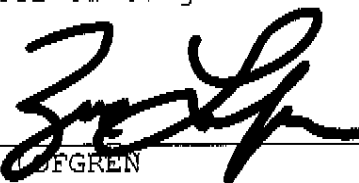
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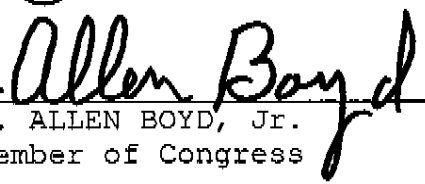

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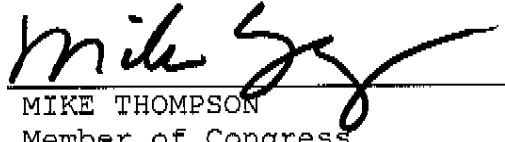

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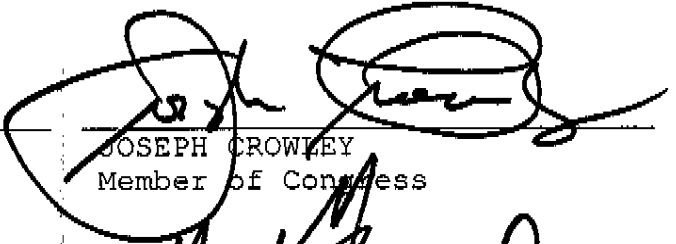

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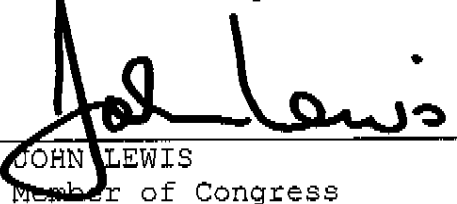

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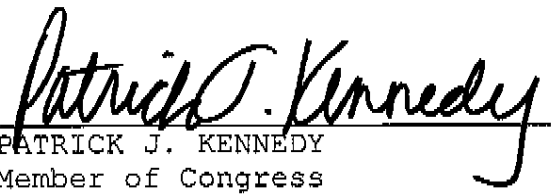

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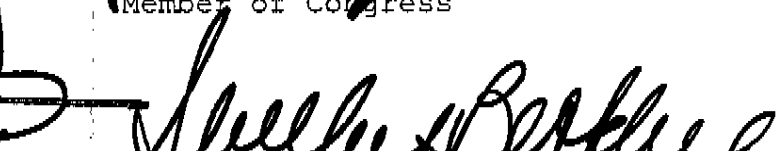

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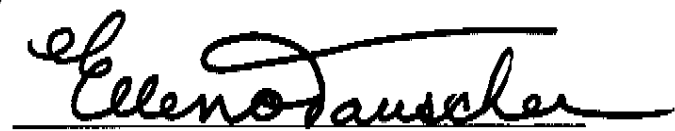

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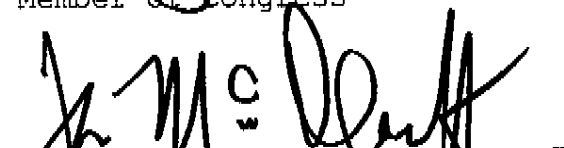

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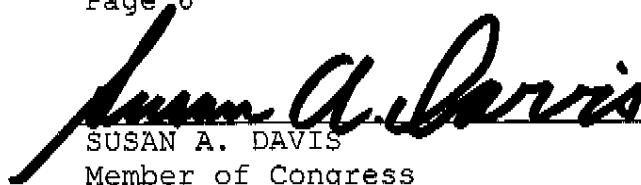

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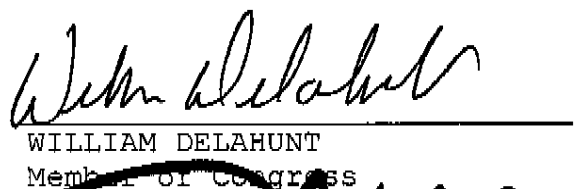

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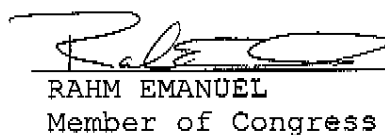

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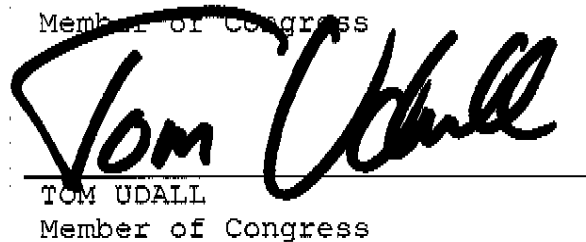

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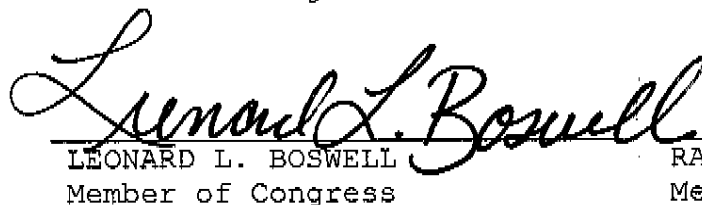

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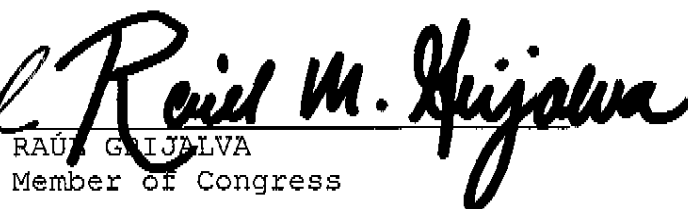

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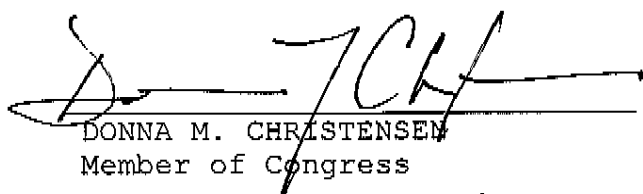

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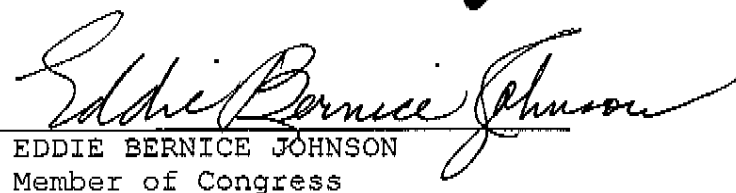

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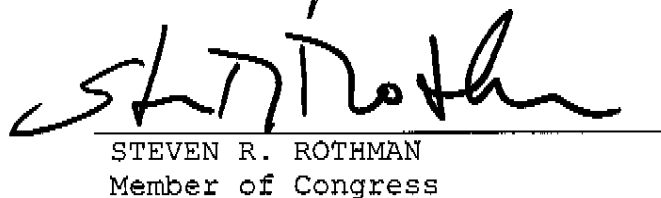

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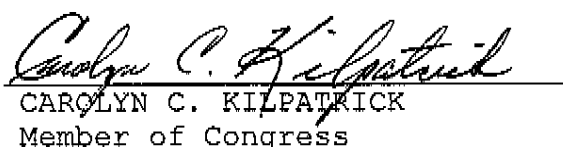

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